Guidelines for External Review of Departments and Programs at Kalamazoo College

Regular external review of departments and programs encourages self-study and planning and provides extramural feedback on effectiveness in educating students and contributing to the College’s mission. Ideally, these reviews would grow out of, and periodically punctuate a regular and ongoing process of assessment, planning and action in which departments and programs engage. Thus, departments and programs should be reviewed by colleagues from peer institutions approximately every ten years, or sooner as needed. A schedule of departmental reviews is available from the Provost’s Office.

Suggested documents to be sent to reviewers before the campus visit

A. Departmental Self-Study and Assessment

- Narrative statement of what the department hopes to accomplish through the external review
- Description of the department, including faculty, students, major curriculum, departmental contributions to general education, and departmental budget and other resources
- Department assessment plan
- Annual reports from carrying out assessment plan and annual Assessment Committee responses to those reports
- Report from previous external review
- Internal documents that address the history or activities of the department since the previous external review (e.g., letters to alumni, faculty presentations, etc.)
- Description of successes of program, opportunities for improving the program, and problems facing the program, as well as an indication of priorities for addressing opportunities and problems if additional resources were available
- Copy of professional standards for the major (i.e., from the relevant professional organization) or a description of national patterns in the discipline, along with a description of how the department’s major program relates to these external standards

B. Supplementary Documents

- Faculty CVs
- Course syllabi (also, identify courses in other departments that are cognates or prerequisites for courses in the home department)
- Departmental Web site – provide link(s) within the narrative about the department
- Suggested program outline for majors
- Brochures describing the program to other constituencies
- Data for the past five years on enrollment, class size, and numbers of majors and minors (provided by the Office of Institutional Research)
- Sample SIPS and description of the SIP symposium if the department has one
- List of sample internships/externships in which majors participate
- Information on immediate placements of graduating seniors for the past five years as well as information on the post-graduate experiences of department alumni over the past decade

(Please see next page for more information.)
C. Institutional Data

- Description of sabbatical leave and other faculty development programs (Faculty Development Web site on the Intranet)
- Names and titles of relevant administrative officers
- Academic Catalogue

Guidelines for planning and conducting an external review

- The department chair usually coordinates the review
- The department should meet with the Provost and the Associate Provosts to discuss self-study
- There are generally two external reviewers, but departments may have need for a third reviewer (with permission from the Provost) depending on the complexity of the department (e.g., the Department of Math and Computer Science comprises two separate disciplines)
- Visits last two days (no more than one and a half days of campus activities unless the complexity of the department necessitates)
- Funds to support the external review are provided by the Provost’s Office, and the department should discuss plans for the visit with the Provost

During the visit, the reviewers should meet with:

- The Provost, at the beginning and at the end of the visit
- Department faculty individually
- The department as a whole two to three times during the visit, including one last time before the reviewers meet with the Provost and the report is finalized
- A group of majors
- Faculty from other departments whose courses connect to those offered by the department being reviewed (e.g., if courses in other departments are prerequisites or cognates)
- Other individuals or groups identified by the Provost, chair or reviewers

Follow-up to the team report

- The Provost and the department receive copies of the report
- The Assessment Committee receives an executive summary of the report as well as any information that may apply to on-going annual assessment work by the department
- The department and the Provost meet to discuss recommendations in the report and how, whether, and/or when they will be implemented
- The department incorporates, where possible, recommendations made by the reviewers into the department assessment plan and responds to the recommendations in annual assessment reports in future years where appropriate
- The Assessment Committee checks in with the department after some time has passed to discuss progress and/or needs in implementing recommendations, especially as they apply to on-going annual assessment work by the department